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Atlantic Notes

"From our shores to yours"

Editorial



Notwithstanding having a lot on his mind, on the very day of his inauguration, President Barack Obama found time to write a letter to the Secretary General of NATO and the Members of the North Atlantic Council. The gesture was extremely significant. Not only does the alliance celebrate its 60th anniversary this year at a time when the

organization faces its biggest challenges since 1949, it is also the multinational organization that the U.S. is often accused of using for its own domestic purposes.

In the letter, congratulations aside, President Obama states he looks "forward to working with all of nations" and highlights that "the United States will remain committed to doing its part to strengthen our common security." Secretary of State Clinton also made NATO a top

priority during her recent international tour. While it is difficult to dissociate NATO from 20th century international affairs, it remains clear that in present and future times security will need to be even more shared.

Younger audiences might enjoy reading about studying in the U.S. and, why not, surfing in California...And since March is also International Women's month, we bring you excerpts of Secretary Clinton's remarks on this date. Enjoy. ♦

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Secretary Clinton on International Women's Day

"I am proud to honor women around the world who are blazing trails and surmounting obstacles in pursuit of equality and opportunity. (...) Put simply, we have much less hope of addressing the complex challenges we face in this new century without the full participation of women. (...)

This is not simply a matter of emotion or altruism. A growing body of research tells us that supporting women is a high-yield

investment, resulting in stronger economies, more vibrant civil societies, healthier communities, and greater peace and stability. But even so, no nation in the world has yet achieved full equality for women. (...)

Women also have a crucial role to play in establishing peace worldwide. In regions torn apart by war, it is often the women who find ways to reach across differences and discover common

ground as mothers, caretakers, and grassroots advocates. (...)

We must remind ourselves that ensuring the rights of women and girls is not only a matter of justice. It is a matter of enhancing global peace, progress, and prosperity for generations to come(...)"

Full Statement

"SUPPORTING WOMEN IS A HIGH-YIELD INVESTMENT," CLAIMED SECRETARY CLINTON DURING HER IWD REMARKS.





Did you know that...?

CAJUN MARDI GRAS TRADITIONS DATE BACK TO MEDIEVAL FRANCE WHEN, ON THE "ANYTHING GOES" HOLIDAY CELEBRATING THE LAST DAY BEFORE THE LENTEN FAST, PEASANTS WOULD DRESS UP IN RIDICULOUS COSTUMES, GENERALLY MOCKING THEIR SUPERIORS.



One of the world's most famous Carnival celebrations takes place in the United States. Although its origin goes back to medieval Europe, *Mardi Gras* was taken to Louisiana by French-Canadian colonizer Jean Baptiste Le Moyne. The first record of *Mardi Gras* celebrations dates back to 1699 with elegant society balls instead of today's popular street parades.

It was not until 1872 that a group of businessmen invented a King of

Carnival and showed him around in the first daytime parade. They introduced the *Mardi Gras* song, flag, and colors of purple (representing justice), green (for faith) and gold (for power). Then later on, in 1873, the Governor of Louisiana turned the celebration into a legal state holiday.

New Orleans is the main stage for *Mardi Gras* in the United States, though other cities organize such celebrations, as well. The French Quarter is invaded

by parade floats, krewes, masks, doubloons, bead necklaces and



king cakes. Cajun food and drink do the rest.

Just as in Rio, celebrities also join these festivities. This year, actors Val Kilmer and Jim Belushi, singer Harry Connick Jr. and CNN anchor Soledad O'Brien are joining the revelry. Why not you next year? ♦

STATE of mind: CALIFORNIA

It cannot be a mere coincidence. Artists as diverse as the Beatles, Gianna Nannini, Lenny Kravitz, the Mamas and the Papas, Pink, Meatloaf and so many others have sung the praises of the "Golden State"; hundreds of films have been shot there and the more recent TV series *O.C.* has helped immortalize local lifestyle.

California has got to be one of the best known American states abroad. Its more than amenable climate; Hollywood; Silicon Valley; surfing; universities such as of UC Berkeley, USC, UCLA, or Stanford; tourism; wine and even Governor Schwarzenegger's leading environmental policies in recent years — all have helped to consolidate California's image with the rest of the world.



"IF EVERYBODY HAD AN OCEAN ACROSS THE U.S.A. THEN EVERYBODY'D BE SURFIN LIKE CALIFORNIA

YOU'D SEEM EM WEARING THEIR BAGGIES HUARACHI SANDALS, TOO A BUSHY BUSHY BLONDE HAIRDO" SURFIN' U.S.A.

BEACH BOYS

From the first European discoveries in 1542, through the Gold Rush and Great Depression, to today's aspiring celebrities heading to California, this state has continuously nurtured the dreams of men and women seeking something special. Whether you tour San Francisco on a tram, enjoy the sun in Malibu or peek at celebrity homes in Los Angeles, you are bound to make the most of life in this quintessentially American state.

If you plan to visit us, go to the official state's website or click on www.visitcalifornia.com, a site that even has a Portuguese version available. Either way, you will find plenty of tips and information. Not only will you discover an earthly version of paradise, you may actually bump into one of your favorite stars. The risk is you will not want to return home... ♦

For more information, visit <http://www.ca.gov>



Studying in the United States

The Fulbright Program is an educational exchange program, established in the U.S. by Senator J. William Fulbright and signed by President Harry Truman in 1946. In the aftermath of the Second World War, Senator Fulbright intended to create an international educational and cultural exchange program for students and scholars to promote peace and mutual understanding. Otilia Macedo Reis, Executive Director of the Fulbright Commission in our country, explains what it can do for Portuguese students and scholars.



Atlantic Notes (AN) — Who can apply and how are Fulbright grantees selected?

Otilia Reis (OR) — Fulbright grants provide Portuguese students and scholars with opportunities to study, lecture or do research in the U.S. and American students and scholars to develop such activities in Portugal. Fulbright grants also enable Portuguese institutions to host American scholars and researchers. All applicants are required to have a good level of English and a degree adequate to their objectives (students should have completed undergraduate studies – “licenciatura” - preferably with a final average equal or higher than 14; scholars and researchers should have a

PhD degree completed or undergoing). The selection process for the Fulbright grants is entirely merit-based.

AN—When are grant competitions opened and what are the deadlines?

OR—Actually, grant competitions are currently open: various Grants for Portuguese Students (deadline March 31, 2009), as well as Grants for Portuguese Institutions of Higher Education, a competition on a rolling basis.

Application is always online and detailed information (including the guidelines for each competition) may be found on our web site: www.fulbrightportugal.org.

AN—Do you keep contact with grantees once they return?

OR—Yes, we usually keep contact with grantees while they stay in the U.S. and once they return, by organizing regular meetings and alumni activities. Fulbrighters also often participate in the interview selection committees, and help with the orientation and pre-departure meetings Fulbright organizes for the new grantees. The alumni association – Fulbrighters Portugal – also organizes activities and helps grantees to stay in touch.

AN—What basic advice would you give our readers,

if interested in studying in the U.S.?

OR—The process of applying to a Fulbright grant, and to U.S. universities in general, takes time, preparation, self assessment and serious thinking about the study or research topic, its importance and its feasibility. This process must begin long before the application deadline. Therefore, I would recommend potential applicants to prepare their application carefully and in time, paying special attention to the letters of reference, the personal essay and the project proposals they present.

AN—What other type of activities does the Commission organize in Portugal?

OR—Parallel to its key activity – the Grant Program – the Commission administers a public information service, which is of the utmost importance to both countries due to its nature, uniqueness, and efficiency. The Fulbright Information Center is the sole officially recognized information service on U.S. education in Portugal and, in addition, is the only center authorized by the U.S. Department of State to certify diplomas obtained in the United States.

AN—The Fulbright Commission's half century is coming up...

OR—Yes, our 50th anniversary will be celebrated in 2010. I can say a number of special initiatives are being prepared and will be announced soon. ●

SINCE THE PORTUGUESE-AMERICAN FULBRIGHT COMMISSION WAS CREATED 49 YEARS AGO, OVER 1,300 PORTUGUESE AND 750 AMERICAN STUDENTS AND SCHOLARS HAVE BEEN AWARDED FULBRIGHT GRANTS IN A WIDE VARIETY OF ACADEMIC FIELDS.



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WE ARE ON THE WEB!

Please visit us

<http://portugal.usembassy.gov>

This month

☞ **March 11-** Algarve Women's Football Cup 2009

☞ **March 16 -** Embassy-sponsored speaker Gary Nordlinger

speaks on political communication at FLAD

☞ **March 25-27** Signing ceremony in the Azores for the installation of a temporary climate change research facility by the U.S. Department of Energy.

@ a Glance: NATO's 60th Anniversary

On the Alliance's 60th anniversary, *Atlantic Notes* asked Portuguese personalities what is the importance of NATO for Portugal. Here are the first two statements:

General Loureiro dos Santos

"60 years ago, Portugal was not a democracy unlike the rest of NATO's founding members. But its relevant strategic position was essential to the Alliance's solid defense, so our country was invited to join. For Portugal, NATO has been of utmost relevance. It has ensured defense towards any potential enemy; it has contributed to permanent modernization

of the Armed Forces, and it has given military officers the opportunity to socialize with comrades in arms of democratic countries - which was important to the establishment of Portuguese democracy in 1974. The moment has come to adjust NATO to the challenges of the future, maintaining its defensive goals based upon a solid transatlantic block united by common values and interests."

Director of National Defense Institute António José Telo

"The importance of NATO to Portugal can be summarized as follows: a) it promoted and accelerated the evolution of mentalities, specially among Armed Forces, in favor of a western democratic regime; b) it inserted Portugal in the western defense system; c) it framed numerous bilateral relations, namely with the U.S.; it allowed for the modernization of the Armed Forces and its monitorization of the transformation of defense in the West, over decades." ❖

PORTUGAL IS ONE OF
NATO'S FOUNDING
MEMBERS, HAVING
JOINED THE ALLIANCE
IN APRIL OF 1949.

